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Euro-Neutralism

Walter Laqueur

No country is entirely the master of its own fate, not even the Soviet Union or the United States. But there are degrees and degrees of dependence (just as there are degrees of freedom of action), and Europe's decline in this respect has been striking. Self-Finlandization, the voluntary subordination of the European political order to the interests and wishes of the Soviet Union, has made considerable advances in recent years. The process goes on sometimes quite openly, without any attempt to embellish the true state of affairs, while at other times it assumes the guise of an "independent policy" or a "third way." The acrimonious exchanges between European governments and Washington over the handling of the Iran crisis, and the palpable sense of disappointment with Europe that one sees and hears in much American talk and writing, are all symptoms of this process. The question now is how far it is likely to go.

The general phenomenon of dependence is hardly new. As long as there have been states, the smaller and weaker have adjusted themselves to the wishes of the big and powerful. Such accommodation has ranged from the mere taking care not to offend one's larger neighbor on issues of major importance, to total satellization, with many stages in between.

An intricate client system existed in Roman times. Rome was by no means out to humiliate its foreign client-princes—on the contrary, they were treated as friends and allies, and some were even granted Roman citizenship. As long as Rome trusted its "allies," it did not interfere in their domestic policies. But decisions about war and peace were made only by the Roman Senate. A client could neither make war nor conclude peace, and if he received an invitation to visit Rome, he would have been ill-advised to postpone his arrival. Clients volunteered their help in time of war even though nowhere in the treaties was automatic assistance so much as mentioned; it was obvious what would happen if they hesitated or refused.

Another interesting example of institutional dependence was created by the British, or to be precise the East India Company, in the 18th century. Britain had neither the manpower nor the means for the physical conquest and permanent administration of the whole subcontinent. It preferred indirect rule. Like the clients of Rome, the maharajas of Hyderabad, Mysore, and Jodhpur were not subjects but allies of Britain. They had small armies and in principle were under no obligation to accept the advice of the British political officers residing at their courts. Some of them, in fact, supported the Congress movement in later years, a policy hardly welcome to the British authorities in New Delhi.

This form of dependence is at present more typical of the relationship between Moscow and Eastern Europe than of that between Moscow and Western Europe. But already the relation between the latter is no longer one of equals: would the Europeans dare prescribe to the Soviets—as the Soviets do to them—what weapons they may or may not deploy, or threaten the Soviet Union with reprisals if Moscow failed to comply with European demands? With the change in the balance of power (real or perceived) and the internal division and the weakness of Western Europe (real or imaginary), the East European model or something like it may well be the wave of the future.

Such a new relationship ("a higher stage of détente"), more subtle than what already obtains between the Soviet Union and Finland, would amount to undeclared neutralism (rather than, as in the Finnish case, neutrality sanctioned in a treaty). The West European countries would not be asked to leave NATO, provided they accepted the fact that Soviet military predominance had come to stay and made no attempt to restore the balance. Europe would also have to accept the Soviet interpretation of détente as binding—which would mean, among other things, that events in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East could not be permitted to affect the state of affairs in Europe. In addition, there would occur an intensification of trade relations with the Soviet Union, meaning more loans, credits, and transfer of technology. Finally, no Western European opposition would

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be forthcoming to major Soviet foreign-policy initiatives, and there would be no adverse comments concerning Soviet domestic affairs—in other words, self-censorship.

As for the Soviet Union, it would not directly interfere in the internal affairs of Western Europe except if there were a danger of political parties and leaders coming to power who might give less than wholehearted support to the new relationship. Under such circumstances, the Soviet Union would have not only the right but the duty to exert heavy political pressure.

There would be no need to spell all this out in great detail. European leaders have enough political intelligence to behave according to the ground rules without being given precise explanations and instructions. Indeed, this arrangement is not only a possibility; in some respects it is already a reality, as a tour of the European horizon quickly reveals.

FOR many years now France has been Europe's Achilles heel. Other governments have made a shibboleth of national egotism, interpreted in the most narrow and ultimately self-defeating way, but nowhere else has it been accompanied by so much rhetorical humbug. We have heard of France's civilizing mission, its high status in world affairs, the wholly disinterested character of its foreign policy: alone among the nations it has always been willing to help when the cause of liberty has been in danger. This kind of rhetoric has been part of French political life for a long time, and no one has ever taken it wholly seriously. But the discrepancy between the noble phrases and the reality has hardly ever been so glaring.

No other country has insisted so much as France on an independent European policy, and none has done so much to sabotage it. Underlying the post-Gaullist phraseology there has been, more often than not, the mentality of Vichy, with national pride and superior political wisdom serving as a cloak for the anxiety and the defeatism which spread in Paris whenever a cold wind blows from the East or when oil-producing countries make threatening noises.

But what about France's independent deterrent, its nuclear artillery and submarines, its silos in the massif of Albion? The Soviets, for one, have never taken these quite seriously—and rightly so. It is the moral fiber and the determination of the leadership that count, not the number of divisions and their equipment. There was something rotten in France in 1940 (when the French army, contrary to widespread belief, was not that weak), and there is something rotten now.

For in what other democratic society could the leadership of a major party act with such open cynicism as do the French Communists, and get away with it? Some have talked of a "surprising re-Stalinization" of the party, as if it had ever been *de*-Stalinized except in the dream world of some American political scientists. Actually, the Communists and Giscard d'Estaing have an overriding common interest—to prevent a union of the Left. Barring some totally unforeseen development, Giscard will be reelected president next year, and the price to be paid will be that he do nothing to offend the Soviets. Neither the Communist leader Georges Marchais nor the Kremlin will care if this arrangement is dressed up as a proud manifestation of French independence.

No one can fairly accuse the French of a lack of talent or intelligence. Perhaps—beyond the incomprehensible actions of the present leadership—there may be a deeper wisdom, a farsighted statesmanship, a sobriety, the true value of which will prove itself only in years to come? Alas, there is nothing of the sort, only cynicism, the perspicacity of the small shopkeeper bereft of his common sense, and the rationalization of weakness. True, there have been signs of revival, and there are such signs even now, but these are as yet minority views which have not made a decisive mark on French politics.

BRITAIN has shown more solidarity with Washington than most other European nations, but this, unfortunately, is not saying very much. Economically, Britain is steadily falling behind the rest of Europe. Its weaknesses have reemerged with a vengeance after a partial and temporary recovery during the last years of Labor's rule, and this despite the flow of North Sea oil. The outlook for the period ahead is grim. A country poor in resources, Britain depends largely on foreign trade, yet it is losing its ability to compete in world markets. Mrs. Thatcher's rise to power was accompanied by great expectations in some quarters in Washington, but the achievements of the Tory government have been few. (There could have been no lasting achievements without far-reaching changes in public attitudes, which should have been clear from the beginning but was not.) Meanwhile, the Labor party, manipulated by a relatively small but determined group of militants, has moved to the Left.

The term "Left" in this context is invoked in conformity with common usage, which lags behind events by several decades. There is nothing particularly left-wing or radical about those who now dominate the counsels of the Labor party or about their attitudes: protectionism, anti-Europeanism, a siege mentality leading to a siege economics and ultimately to a siege politics. A Labor party of this kind has little chance of attaining power even though the polls may today show it ahead of the Tories. But a Labor party permanently in opposition only means a deepened polarization, more frustration, more strikes both official and wildcat, greater lawlessness, and a further weakening of the authority of democratic institutions.

In Italy, if there has been no visible improve-

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ment, there has been no marked deterioration either. A state of affairs which many thought could not possibly endure has in fact persisted, and for the time being the worst has not happened.

Spain has been one of the few success stories of the 1970's, but of late the situation there has taken a turn for the worse. After a remarkably smooth transition from dictatorship to democracy, a negative mood has spread, expressing itself on the one hand in apathy and on the other in a growing dissatisfaction with political institutions, in the growth of regionalism and the proliferation of political parties. The ruling Christian Democrats garnered only one-tenth of the vote in the elections in the most highly industrialized parts of the country; but the Socialists, the main opposition party, also lost votes. Spanish industry has been hit harder than any other in Europe by the rise of oil prices. There is now little new investment and 10 per-cent unemployment; most of the unemployed are young workers. Terrorism contributes to the erosion of the legitimacy of the state. It is financed and supported from abroad (Libya and Algeria), and the French authorities have been less than helpful in combating the ETA on their side of the border.

ABOVE ALL, however, it is Germany which counts. For the last two decades it has been the most stable force on the continent, and even now Helmut Schmidt's government is the only one which continues to be reasonably effective and popular. According to present indications, the Social Democrats should have no difficulty winning the elections in October. There is one cloud on the political horizon: the ecologists (the "Greens") have had some regional breakthroughs, and some think they might repeat their success nationwide. At their recent convention, however, they made the mistake of spelling out their political program in complete detail, and as a result they will probably lose the support of those sympathizers who do not subscribe to New Left doctrine.

Yet with all this there have been disquieting signs out of Germany. Some of the elder statesmen of the Social Democratic party, notably Willy Brandt, Herbert Wehner, and Egon Bahr, while reaffirming their loyalty to the Western alliance, have veered toward some form of neutralism. The young Socialists, the Jusos, who constitute perhaps up to a third of the party activists, have gone even further. They supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan with greater enthusiasm than did some West European Communist parties—which, however cautiously, dissociated themselves from the Soviet action.

It has been fascinating to watch the change in the outlook of Wehner, Brandt, and their colleagues, precisely because, unlike some Western liberals, they have few illusions about Communism and the Soviet Union. (Wehner was a leading Communist up to the early 1940's, while Brandt was in the forefront of the battle against the Communists as chief Burgomaster of Berlin.) Could the rapprochement they now advocate be connected with the hope of achieving an all-German confederation? Perhaps, to some extent. But far more important seems to be the impact on these men of the change in the balance of power in Europe. The Soviet Union, as they see it, has become the leading force in Europe, and West Germany has to accept the fact. Under no circumstances must it be forced into a conflict with its powerful neighbor. If Germany remains reasonably strong and prosperous, they believe, it will have little to fear from Moscow.

With certain reservations, Brandt and Wehner support NATO, for they know that without American help Germany would not be able to resist Soviet pressure for long. But they oppose attempts to extend allied solidarity outside Europe; and to make German participation in NATO palatable to the Russians, they also want Germany to be the Western country most conciliatory toward the Soviet Union.

It could be said in defense of such ideas that the overall perspective from Hamburg—a distance of 30 miles from Soviet forward units—let alone from Berlin, is not the same as from Washington. As Brandt and Wehner see it, Germans will always have to be more accommodating toward the Soviet Union in view of their geographical proximity, their traditional trade relations, and, of course, their relationship with East Germany.

This view does not lack a certain plausibility, but it is based on weak premises: Germany needs the U.S. much more than the U.S. needs Germany. Without the support of the alliance, Germany would be directly exposed to Soviet pressure. Good relations with the Soviet bloc may be desirable but the American umbrella is essential; without it, there is no future for *Ostpolitik*. In fact, the Germans have it backward. If NATO in Europe were stronger than it is, a certain amount of German *Alleingänge* (solo runs) would not necessarily be fatal to the alliance; in view of the weakness of NATO, they would almost certainly lead to its collapse. Chancellor Schmidt, a sensible man, is aware of the dilemma. And yet in an unfortunate speech he said that "We cannot afford gestures of strength and we are sick and tired of demonstrating that we are vigorous and imperturbable." Also, probably as a concession to the left wing of his party, he suggested a temporary halt in the deployment of missiles in Europe. Reasonable as this may sound, it amounts to the perpetuation of the Soviet military advantage in Europe—the root cause of the present imbalance and of the crisis in détente.

NO ONE in Europe expects a military attack on the central front. Soviet policy in Central Europe is to make the most of

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the cleavages and conflicts among the Western allies and wherever possible to deepen them. The two critical areas in Europe are the north—Scandinavia, to which Holland could be added—and the southern flank.

There has been growing Soviet pressure in Scandinavia, in a way that may well foreshadow a new pattern. The Soviet Union has built up the Kola peninsula as a major naval and strategic-nuclear missile base. Soviet naval units are permanently found on a line reaching from Iceland to the Shetlands and the Faroe Islands. Soviet naval maneuvers leave little doubt that in case of war it would be the main task of the Russian fleet to cut the lines of allied communications across the North Atlantic. Scandinavia now finds itself behind the new Soviet forward lines.

The obvious answer to the Soviet military build-up would be to set up Western missile-launching sites in the area. But this is thought to be politically impossible, for it would only lead to further escalation. It is the old vicious circle: the Soviet Union is permitted to gain a considerable military advantage, the balance of power changes, and once this has happened it becomes exceedingly difficult to restore the balance, for any such attempt is attacked by the Russians (and by domestic appeasers) as a provocation endangering détente and world peace.

Considering the weakness of NATO in the north, as well as the fact that Sweden no longer counts as a serious military factor, Norway has stood up remarkably well to Soviet pressure. But even in Norway there have been signs of "adjustment." As Nils Ørvik has put it in a recent article in *Aftenposten*, Soviet policy is aimed at weakening Norway's links with its Western allies:

> The purpose of such a weakening of ties can only be to coax Norway back to an undeclared neutralist policy with a totally insufficient and merely symbolic defense program. Given such a state of affairs, public declarations of neutrality are quite unnecessary. What counts is not what one says, but what ones does—or fails to do.

Many do not want Norway to become a small country standing alone, with virtually no chance of resisting the designs of its powerful neighbor. But there are others—not only the few left-wing Socialists but a substantial nationalist-neutralist-isolationist group which is by no means pro-Soviet but has decided simply to ignore events outside Norway. Their neutralism is a function of their domestic orientation; many of them opposed Norway's entry into the EEC out of fear that it would have a detrimental effect on the traditional way of life. Again to quote Ørvik:

> It is a wonder that so many of our domestic struggles for political power take place with the participants blind to foreign policy. So many Norwegians whose patriotism cannot be questioned participate in a process of "self-censorship" [vis-à-vis the Soviet Union] that conflicts with the entire theoretical basis upon which our democratic control rests.

It is, in some ways, 1939 all over again: Norway will be safe if only it sticks to its neutrality. As the *Norway Year Book* of 1938 put it, "The country is easy to defend"—with 13,000 soldiers under arms and a conscription period of eight weeks!

With all this, Norway is making efforts to strengthen its defenses—which is more than can be said for Denmark and Holland. The Danish Socialists (particularly the left wing) and the Radical Liberals actually wish to reduce a defense budget which is already one of the lowest in Europe. At the same time they oppose under any circumstances the presence of foreign troops on Danish soil. Thus not only the defense of Denmark is endangered but that of Scandinavia as a whole. (As General Hamre, the Norwegian chief of staff, said: "We may have to increase our own defense budget to the extent that the Danes reduce theirs.")

Indifference toward defense and the belief that Denmark is surrounded by friends and well-wishers may to a certain extent be generationally determined. When Erik Ninn Hansen, then the defense minister, was awakened on the night of August 21, 1968 and told about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, he thought immediately (as he later wrote in his memoirs) of April 9, 1940, when the Germans occupied Denmark in the space of a few hours. But twelve years have now passed; the anti-defense lobby of 1980 consists largely of younger men and women who were in kindergarten or not yet born in 1940. For all they know the invasion never happened.

Defeatism in the Netherlands has similar roots. Those who lived through World War II and witnessed the consequences of unarmed neutrality are now gradually disappearing from the political scene. To be against defense has become fashionable, with pacifism now strongly recommended by the churches and the media. A high moral stance prevails: Holland can and should serve as a model of unilateral disarmament for all of Western Europe. Most of those advocating this line are by no means Communists or fellow travelers but well-meaning and concerned citizens who genuinely believe that their stand will promote the cause of peace. They can easily be exploited by those with specific goals in mind. The Soviet ambassador to the Hague recently received a high decoration from his government for having (in the words of a leading Dutch writer) so "deftly manipulated us" into taking the lead in the campaign against the modernization of tactical nuclear weapons.

Compared with Denmark and the Netherlands, the attitude of Finland has been almost heroic. When the Finnish government published a statement on Afghanistan that was vague to the point

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of unintelligibility (which may have been the intention in the first place), several newspapers openly criticized it, one even complaining about the double standard being applied: what would have been the reaction if the U.S. had dared to invade Nicaragua? When the Finnish foreign minister refused to give even verbal support to the U.S. on the hostage-taking in Iran, *Helsingin Sanomat* editorialized that this lack of response did not at all jibe with the view of the Finnish people. Finland's dependence on the Soviet Union has not lessened in recent years, and for this reason such manifestations of dissent (and even defiance) show real political courage. In the end, one has to sympathize with those in Helsinki who object to the indiscriminate use of the term "Finlandization." Finland, more often than not, acts as it does out of dire necessity, whereas the self-Finlandizers in Paris, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam face no such obligation.

IN CONTRAST to the massive Soviet pressure in northern Europe, there has been hardly any in the South, nor has there been any need for it. The NATO southern flank has disintegrated as a result of internal strains and conflicts.

The sad story of Turkey is well known. Foreign debts, domestic prices, and unemployment rates have continued to rise; smuggling and the black market have expanded; the growth rate and investment have fallen ever lower. A major financial operation to assist Turkey has been launched—$2 billion from OECD, IMF, and EEC—but since Turkey has to pay about that much in interest this year, and in addition will have to cover a $3.5 billion oil bill, the aid may not even compensate for half of this year's deficit. An inflated state apparatus consisting of more than a million civil servants, many of them political appointees, fails to cope with the administration of the country. Teachers, the judiciary, even the police are split along political lines and have joined the fray on opposite sides of the barricades. President Ecevit's Republicans have moved Left: some thirty representatives in parliament are said to be Communists who have joined the Republicans because there is no legal Communist party in the country. On the other side, the trend has been to the Right, toward Islamic and Pan-Turk revivalism.

The Turkish army, much against its wishes, has been drawn into the struggle, so far only on a regional basis. The army remains the sole force that could prevent chaos, but it cannot solve the questions to which the politicians have failed to find answers. Nor do its commanders want to step in unless there is a danger of total breakdown—a situation that may arise in the not-too-distant future. Up to 1979, terrorist actions were carried out more or less "evenly" by gangs of the extreme Right and Left; during the last year, the Left has greatly increased its share. The fact that the Turkish Left is divided into some forty factions and groupuscules has not made much difference in this respect; it just makes the work of the police that much more difficult. The Left terrorists seem to receive help from abroad, from the Greek opposition and via East Germany and Bulgaria, acting presumably on behalf of a bigger power. As for Armenian terrorism, it is almost entirely limited to operations outside Turkey and is little more than a nuisance compared with the Kurdish problem, which is a potential time bomb. For this reason, the Turkish rulers follow with much apprehension the Kurdish struggle in Iraq and Iran.

There have been indications of late that the Turks may be willing to make concessions on Cyprus, but there seems to be less eagerness on the part of Greece to resolve the matter. Andreas Papandreou, the head of the Greek opposition (Pasok) has made Cyprus ("the greatest national treason of our age") one of the main issues in his campaign against Karamanlis. Since the next elections may not be far off, and since Pasok has been gaining, the government coalition seems reluctant to do anything that will open it to charges of "appeasing" the Turks. Whether Papandreou is a man of the Left, a "Mediterranean Socialist," or an egomaniac with pronounced fascist tendencies is a subject on which one could discourse at length. His political platform combines extreme chauvinism—he would like to attack Turkey immediately if this were possible—with anti-Western demagoguery directed not only against NATO but also against the EEC. In this respect he follows the Soviet line more closely than do most West European Communist leaders, his closest allies being radical Third World leaders like Qaddafi.

In a recent parliamentary debate, as Papandreou again claimed that NATO and Europe were undermining the democratic institutions of Greece, Prime Minister Karamanlis interjected: " 'When you left Greece, where did you go?' (Laughter.) Papandreou: 'I did not hear you. . . .' " Papandreou, it will be recalled, went to the United States, which was a misfortune, for a prolonged stay in the Soviet Union would have had a more salutary effect on his thinking.

The appeal of Pasok is not so much to the working class as to the lower-middle class; paradoxically, it is also quite strong in the countryside because it has made even more extravagant (and unrealistic) promises to the peasants than has the government coalition. Whether democratic institutions would survive under Papandreou is, at best, a matter of doubt. Yet Pasok (together with the Communists) has today a better chance of attaining power than any other anti-Western party in Europe, not because of any immediate severe economic or political crisis but apparently because of the traditional impatience and desire for change that seem to be intrinsic to Greek politics. For this reason, Greece could soon become a country of great interest to the Soviet Union.

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One hears much talk today of the "temporary" weakness or eclipse of NATO's southern flank. The truth is that NATO's southern flank does not exist. What exists is a number of bases in Turkey and Greece, and even they cannot be taken for granted. To include the armed forces of Turkey and Greece in the statistics comparing NATO and the Warsaw Pact is mere wishful thinking.

THIS, then, in briefest outline, is Europe's present tale of woe. The facts are not in dispute, but the causes of weakness remain something of a mystery in view of the size of the continent's population, its industrial base, and even its military potential. With all the tribulations, what one sees is not so much a case of "objective" impotence as of a debilitating self-perception: we are weak, we are dependent, we cannot afford heroic gestures. After all, the countries of Europe have been in one or another form of trouble for many years, and at times have been in worse shape—and yet they did not present such a sad spectacle. In the last resort, Europe's paralysis is the price it has had to pay for its inability to unite beyond the stage of a customs union.

Europe divided is not in a position to resist Soviet or Third World pressure effectively, nor can it influence the senior partner in the Atlantic alliance. It can complain about not being consulted by Washington, but since there is no common European policy on any major issue, or any mechanism for consultation, complaints are futile.

But even a divided Europe should be able to acquit itself more honorably and to make its influence more strongly felt. What prevents the assertion of its political will? How is one to explain European fear of the consequences of economic sanctions against the Soviet Union of the kind urged by the United States in the wake of Afghanistan? Anyone not familiar with the relevant figures might well conclude that the West European economy would collapse but for the Russian connection. Yet in actual fact the Soviet Union is not among West Germany's ten most important customers, and its share in the foreign trade of France, Italy, and Britain is 3 per cent or less. There is no rational basis for these apprehensions.

The oil-producing countries are more important to Western Europe than is the Soviet Union, but even so it is difficult to understand why a country such as Britain (much less dependent than the rest on oil imports) should have made such abject and yet futile apologies ("subservient and groveling," in the words of a Member of Parliament) to Saudi Arabia over the recent showing in England of *Death of a Princess*, a film reconstruction of the story of a Saudi princess executed because of her relations with a commoner. (The Swedes prevented the screening of the film. They were praised by the Saudis for their "proud stand.") Even more disgraceful were the admonitions offered by some organs of the European press, lecturing the British on the need to refrain from actions offensive to the religious sensibilities of non-Europeans. A London paper had the following to say on the subject: "It is hard to know which is the more sickening—the executions themselves or the prurient and hypocritical way in which the affair has been treated in some of the European media." (But another editorial in the same paper offered this comment about America's plea for solidarity over Iran: "Friendship does not inevitably mean unqualified support for a course of action," etc., etc. Unqualified support is apparently something reserved for one's best customers.)

Some observers explain the afflictions of Europe's spinal column by referring to its growing "Levantinization." The demographic and cultural scene is certainly changing. Every fourth child born in Frankfurt is foreign; the number of foreigners in Belgium is greater than that of the inhabitants of Brussels; some thirty London cinemas show only Indian films these days; one-fourth of the labor force at Renault and at Dagenham (British Ford) is foreign. There are substantial Eritrean colonies in the Black Forest, and even bigger Algerian communities in French provincial cities. Whole suburbs of Berlin and other German cities have been taken over by Turks.

Some Europeans welcome the influence of both wealthy foreigners and "guest workers"—to use the misleading German term; others resent it. Indeed, the influx of so many new immigrants would not necessarily be a source of weakness to Europe if they could be integrated into their host societies. But the new immigrants are taught by their ideologists to reject European values, and this, on top of the inevitable economic and social strains, will lead with near certainty to major tensions; European society will not be the same as it once was. But this is a problem for the 1990's. Levantinization cannot explain Europe's weakness today.

Is the answer simply fear of the Russians? Or despair of America? It must be said that Washington is not blameless. Europe's impotence is partly a function of American weakness, and of the belief that America, being weak, cannot be trusted. Again and again the Carter administration has contributed to the confusion prevailing in Europe. Signals from Washington are unintelligible: one day Europeans are told that a war in the Persian Gulf may be imminent, the next it is solemnly proclaimed that on no account will use be made of a military option. Unfortunately, the recent showdown between America and its allies over the issue of sanctions against Iran centered on the wrong question, and so will resolve nothing.

Economic sanctions have virtually never worked even if unanimously adopted, and there is no reason to assume that they will be effective in the case of Iran. Given the anarchic conditions inside Iran—likely to continue for a long time—it is

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doubtful, indeed, that any pressure will work. There were only two ways to free the hostages—by a well-prepared commando raid or by the capture of Iranian hostages. The one failed, the other was not even tried. All other courses of action were, or are, exercises in futility or worse. The real problem in any case is not Iran but the containment of the Soviet Union, which brings us back once again to the solidarity of the Western alliance.

AMERICA's task in Europe is twofold, to reassure the faint-hearted and to stiffen the resolve of those who are prepared to stand straight. Some observers have reluctantly reached the conclusion that the chances of success are poor. The European malaise has been going on for a long time and there have been no signs of a real recovery. Everything has been tried from friendly persuasion to minor shock treatment—but America's European allies seem to be less trustworthy now than eighteen years ago, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, when de Gaulle and Adenauer gave America their full support. Such steadfastness has now become rare; today the Americans are lectured on the virtues of crisis management and the need for better understanding between the superpowers. Some European politicians complain about the imbecility of American policy-makers—as if the record of these modern Rolands, Hotspurs, and Galahads entitled them to pass judgment on anyone.

But the picture is not entirely bleak. True enough, America's attitude toward its European allies will in the future have to be considerably tougher—which is not to say that Washington can demand European support for every election-year maneuver. Nor does it mean American dictatorial rule over NATO; on the contrary, Europe should be encouraged not to wait for U.S. leadership but to take greater initiative. It does, however, presuppose clear and consistent American policies. European allies should be expected to live up to their defense commitments and to show solidarity at a time of crisis. If some are not willing to do so, if they have reached the conclusion that they face no dangers and can get along like Sweden, they should not be implored to stay within the alliance. Such countries should rather be encouraged to go their own way and to look for reassurance from the Russians, the French, the Libyans, and other potential protectors. If they think they can come up with an alternative to NATO, let them try it. The alliance will not be weaker for their loss.

But it can be predicted with some confidence that no country will in fact leave the alliance; the invocation of quasi-neutrality is no more than idle talk. Europe has nowhere to go, and societies seldom accept voluntary satellization.

What if confusion and defeatism are after all so deeply ingrained in Europe that recovery has become impossible? As to the confusion, which is indeed far-reaching, it is not impervious to shocks —such as Teheran and Kabul. Defeatism, on the other hand, is far less tractable; there is no reasoning with fear. It is true that in some sectors fear is by now so deeply rooted that voluntary satellization may appear the least dangerous political option. But again, as in America, only a minority has been affected, even if it is a highly vocal and influential one. On both sides of the Atlantic, a new generation is now coming to the fore, different in approach from those whose outlook was decisively shaped by the Vietnam trauma and the intellectual bedlam of the late 1960's and early 1970's. It is a generation whose learning process has to start almost from scratch. But it is learning rapidly. Thus while America's relations with its allies are now in the stage of crisis, it is not yet a foregone conclusion that this marks the penultimate step before total breakdown. As the outside pressure grows, indeed, it could also lead to the strengthening of the old defense alliance.

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